SP-02-18 Rev 1 Date: June 2, 2009 To: Homeless Liaison

From: Julia Thorius, Chief, Bureau of Nutrition, Health and School Transportation

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Subject: Homeless Children in the School Nutrition Programs

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title X of NCLB) provides the definition of homeless children and youths for use in education. A provision of the statute requires each public school district to designate a Local Educational Agency (LEA) liaison for homeless children and youth. Most districts have a designated liaison. It is recommended that liaisons be professional staff providing services within the LEA. Non-public schools are encouraged to designate a liaison, use the information shared by the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth or the liaison of the public school district in which the non-public school is located or obtain documentation of homeless status from shelter directors.

This memorandum describes how the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act affects the School Nutrition Programs at the local level.

As specified in the statute, the term "homeless" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The definition includes:

- (i) children and youths who are sharing the house of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- (ii) are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (iii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (iv) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus, or train station, or similar settings; and
- (v) migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above.

## **Cooperation with LEAliaison**

School Food Authorities SFAs) should be particularly sensitive to children and households who are identified by the LEA liaison as homeless. SFAs should work with their LEA liaison for homeless youth. When appropriate, the LEA liaison or SFA should contact Donna Eggleston, State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths at 515-281-3999 to help ensure that homeless childrenhave immediate access to the benefits of the child nutrition programs.

## Documentation of free meal eligibility for homeless children

SFAs may accept documentation that the children are homeless from the LEA liaison or the director of a shelter or transitional housing project where the children reside. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility must consist of the child's name or a list of names, effective date(s), and the signature of the LEA liaison or the director of the shelter or transitional housing project. Documentation may be provided in either a list or an Iowa Eligibility Application signed by the LEA liaison. This documentation must be retained by the SFA in the same manner as an Iowa Eligibility Application.

SFAs must work closely with the LEA liaison and directors of homeless shelters and transitional housing projects to ensure that children are provided free meals benefits as promptly as possibleand to ensure that the SFA is promptly advised when children leave the school. <u>Homeless children are granted year long</u> eligibility even if they no longer meet the definition of homeless.

## Homeless children residing with another household

A child or family may temporarily reside with another household and still be considered homeless under the definition in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, without regard to the . household size and income of the host family. Additionally, when a host family applies for free and reduced price meals for their own children, the host family may, if it chooses, include the homeless family as household members if the host family provides financial support to the homeless family, such as shelter, utilities, clothing or food. In such cases, the host family must also include any income received by the homeless family. School officials must determine eligibility for the host family in the traditional manner using total household members and income from all sources. However, free meal eligibility for the homeless child(ren) is based on the documentation provided by the LEA liaison, even when the child is included on the host family's free and reduced price meal application. Children in host families retain year long eligibility even if the homeless family or child(ren) move out.

## Homeless children who return to their "home" family

Homeless children who return home may be counted as a household member if his family applies for benefits for the other children in the household. If the homeless child leaves the family which has an approved application on file with the SFA, the remaining children retain their year long eligibility. Households may apply or reapply for benefits at any time during the school year,

Questions concerning meal benefits should be directed to Nancy Christensen at 515-281-5663 or nancy.christensen@iowa.govand questions concerning the homeless liaison should be directed to Donna Eggleston at 515-281-3999 or donna.eggleston@iowa.gov